

"Sunshine is delicious, rain is refreshing, wind braces us up, snow is exhilarating; there is really no such thing as bad weather, only different kinds of good weather." -John Ruskin

School Calendar

This Week

Monday, February 8

EC In-Service – NO EC CLASSES

Thursday, February 11

Board Meeting 6:30 pm

Friday, Feb. 12

Grade School ice Skating

Looking Ahead

Monday, Feb. 15 – Friday, Feb. 19

WINTER BREAK – NO SCHOOL

Saturday, Feb. 27

3rd Grade Workday

Tuesday, March 1

6th Grade Parent Evening 6:30 pm

Wednesday, March 2

7th Grade Parent Evening 6:30 pm

Saturday, March 5

RVWS Open House

Monday, March 7 – Friday, March 11

3rd Grade Farm Trip to Hawthorne Valley Farm

Thursday, March 10

Board Meeting 6:30 pm

How to Contact Us

info@rivervalleyschool.org
lc@rivervalleyschool.org
bot@rivervalleyschool.org
pc@rivervalleyschool.org



3rd Grade Play

Please see the end of this week's Current for more photos

Grade School Ice Skating Trip

On Friday, February 12th, the grade school will have their annual Ice Skating Party. This is a field trip for grade school students. We ask families who have early childhood children, to please send them to school as usual and not bring them on the ice skating trip.

There are many reasons for this. Most importantly, it is not safe for little children to be skating in between older, faster, more experienced skaters. Also, it is not fair to early childhood children who don't get to go, while some of their friends are off skating and they are not invited.

In an effort to avoid hurt feelings and hurt bodies and to give the younger ones something to look forward to when they are in the grade school, we ask that only grade school children come to the skating rink on the 12th.

There will be no pizza on 2/12 as stated on the order forms.

Announcements:

The **grade school assembly** scheduled for Thursday, February 11th is cancelled.

Because the snow in our **parking lot** is still a problem, outside dismissal will continue until after Winter Break.

Parent Council Corner

The next PC meeting will be Friday, February 26th at 6:30 pm at The Ship Inn.

Teaching Sensible Science begins on Friday

On Friday, February 12th Waldorf teachers from around the region will be arriving at River Valley for this year's cycle of Teaching Sensible Science. The course is for experienced Waldorf educators who wish to deepen their practice and understanding of the teaching of science in Grades 6-8.

Michael D'Aleo who came to work with our faculty during August in-service and gave a lecture for parents, is teaching the course along with Lylli Anthon, Gary Banks, and Barbara Richardson. Michael will be working with the faculty again on this visit.

This session lasts until Thursday, February 18th and then the group will return for two more sessions in June and October. Thank you to all of the River Valley families who have offered housing for our visiting teachers.

From Administration

New Address

Jen Diedrich (mom of Addy G4) has a new mailing address. They have not moved, they now have mail delivery at their house; they no longer use the PO Box. Please update your directory: 3178 Main Street, Hellertown, PA 18055

Open House – Saturday, March 5th

Help us spread the word! Our big open house is approaching and we would love some help getting the word out. There are postcards and posters in the lobby; please pick up a few and hang them in local stores or mail them to friends. If you would prefer digital let me know and I will email you a PDF version. Big thanks! Renee. For your digital poster contact me at rgoodyear@rivervalleysschool.org

Outreach/Enrollment Coordinator – Immediate Opening!

River Valley Waldorf School is accepting applications to fill a part-time Enrollment Outreach Coordinator position to start immediately. This position is responsible for the development and implementation of the school's marketing and outreach plan to achieve targeted enrollment goals. This person's primary activity will be out in the community to generate enthusiasm for the school and potential enrollment leads. This person will work closely with the Admissions Coordinator, Administration, Faculty and Board of Trustees to develop and implement outreach events and activities to foster the growth of the school. This person will also develop, maintain and quantify reporting statistics on the results of enrollment and outreach activities. Compensation is commensurate with work background and experience.

Qualifications:

- Thorough understanding of Waldorf education and prior involvement in a Waldorf school; training or experience with Waldorf education preferred
- Background in private school marketing, outreach and enrollment development
- Experience in public speaking and, in general, working with the public
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills; works closely with administrative staff, board, faculty, parents and volunteers
- BA/BS – Degree in Marketing, Business, Communications, English or related field or equivalent experience

The application deadline for this position is March 24, 2016. Interested applicants should submit resume, references and a short biographical sketch by email to info@rivervalleysschool.org

If you have any questions please contact Cindy Schretlen, at (610) 982-5606 or cschretlen@rivervalleysschool.org

'Tis the Season for High School Musicals!

Whether you're looking for a family night out, want to support talented RVWS alumni or are interested in taking a look at options for your child's high school experience, the annual flurry of musical theater presented by area high schools can be a ton of fun! There are RVWS alums attending each of these schools; when we know there are former RVWS kids in the cast or stage crew we'll list them. If there is something or someone we've missed, please let us know!

George School Winter Musical: *Les Miserables*

Thursday 2/18 7:30pm (preview), Friday & Saturday 2/19 & 20 8:00pm – free admission, all performances
RVWS Alum Zachary Wander & Julie Smith

Solebury School Musical: *RENT*

Thurs & Friday 2/25, 26 at 7:30pm; Saturday 2/27 at 2:00 and 7:30pm; Sunday 2/28 at 3:00pm
RVWS Alums Teva Skovronek, in the cast, Kathryn Warner assisting the director and Adeline Skovronek and Bianca Sessegolo on the stage crew.

Kimberton Waldorf School Musical: *The Boys From Syracuse*

Thursday 3/3 7:00pm, Friday 3/4 7:30pm, Saturday 3/5 2:00pm & 7:30pm
RVWS Alums Daniel DeVan & Lauren Goodyear

Delaware Valley Regional High School Musical: *Into the Woods*

Thursday & Friday 3/3&4 7:00pm, Saturday 3/5 2:00 & 7:00pm
RVWS Alum Greta Bernhardt

Palisades High School Musical:

Friday & Saturday 3/4 & 5, 7:00pm

Sunday 3/6, 2:00pm

Moravian Academy Musical: Big Fish

Friday & Saturday, 3/4 & 5, 7:00pm; Sunday 3/6, 2:00pm

RVWS Alum Marcella Harvi on the tech crew.

New Hope-Solebury High School Musical:**How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying**

Thurs, Fri & Saturday, 3/10, 11 & 12 7:30pm

Central Bucks West High School Musical:

Thurs, Fri & Saturday, 3/17, 18 & 19, 7:00pm

Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts: The Bald Soprano (not a musical)

Thurs, Fri & Sat 2/25, 26, 27 at 7:00pm; Sunday 2/28 at 2:00pm

Musical: Evita

Thurs, Fri & Sat 4/14, 14 & 16 at 7:00pm; Sunday 4/18 at 2:00pm

Classroom Visitors

In the coming weeks there will be visiting teachers observing and teaching in grade school classrooms. One will be Mrs. Zamorano from Sunbridge Institute who is working toward her Waldorf teacher certification and is student teaching in Mrs. Sweeney's 4th grade, as well as observing and teaching in other grades. There will also be teacher candidates who have applied for positions for next year. If you see our guests in the hallways, please make them feel welcome.

From the Faculty**What the Children are Learning:**

First Grade – Language Arts

Second Grade – Math

Third Grade – Science/Arithmetic

Fourth Grade – Zoology

Fifth Grade – Geometry

Sixth Grade – Imperial Rome/Christianity/Imperial Byzantium/Islam

Seventh Grade – Physics

Eighth Grade – Asian Geography

An Opportunity

Every child works at his or her own pace in Handwork and sometimes a project does not get completed by the end of the year. Miss Till is offering after-school opportunities (free of charge) for help with current or past handwork projects. She will be offering these most Tuesdays 3:30 - 4:30. Please get in touch with her to let her know to expect your child. mtill@rivervalleysschool.org

Dear River Valley Community,

It is time for our Middle School Musical and this year we are excited to present **Fiddler on the Roof** on the 17th, 18th and 19th of March. While that still seems like a long way in the future we are gearing up for rehearsals, building sets and looking for props.

Please see this list and let Bonnie Pariser or Saba Siddiqui (8th grade parents) know if you can loan us any of the following:

- An old, (small) rustic table
- 3 rustic benches about 40" long
- Old fashioned kitchen wares - pots, pans, brooms, metal bucket, baskets, wash mop.
- An old leather-bound book
- Two place settings - plate, bowl, silver ware - all oldish and not fancy at all.
- An empty green or brown wine bottle (no label) and two glasses (not wine glasses, more like whiskey glasses!)
- White table cloth (any size)
- Wine goblet
- Clubs (like baseball bats) 2 or 3
- An old fashioned suitcase
- 2 silver goblets

On behalf of a very grateful cast, Carol Diven (co-director)

From the Leadership Council

What we are working on?

LC is working with faculty on class teacher placement for next year. This will be shared with parents as soon as the plan is complete and certainly by mid-March.

Working with TDC on teacher mentoring and evaluation.

Looking at the math curriculum in the grade school.

IAT evaluation with the Board of Trustees

The LC has open hours every Tuesday from 3:30-4 for anyone who would like to meet with us. If you have a question or a concern, please stop by. All are welcome.

From the Board

Board of Trustees Meeting Agenda February 10, 2016

Pre Meeting Room Set Up at 6PM Meeting Starts Promptly at 6:30

6:30 – Opening: Verse and candle lighting – Will (10 minutes)

6:40 – LC Report – (25 minutes)

-Why is the pedagogical chair position changing?

7:05 – Capital Campaign Update – (5 minutes)

7:10 – Board Study – A Lecture to Prospective Parents – Will (15 minutes)

- Review pages 45-50; Read 50-55

Proposals and Discussions

7:25 – By Law Review – Will (10 minutes)

- Read Article 4

7:35 – Nominating Committee (5 minutes)

Standing Committee Reports

7:40 – IAT – Will/Nick (15 minutes)

7:55 – Finance – Nick (10 minutes)

8:05 - Break – (10 minutes)

8:15 – Faculty – Christina/Lynn (15 minutes)

- By-law question

- Confirm damage with AWSNA is corrected

8:30 – Parent Council –Clare (5 minutes)

Committee Reports

8:35 – Auction Committee – Ron/Clare (10 minutes)

8:45 - Items from the Board President – Will (10 minutes)

- Open Table

- Auction Item

Closing and Meeting Feedback

Board Nominations

As per the Board of Trustees bylaws, the Board has established a nominating committee whose charge is to provide a slate of candidates for vacant Trustee positions. The committee is comprised of Kristyn Lederer, Clare Wargaski, John Wesp, and Richard Kroth. We anticipate four vacancies for next year, and are soliciting nominations from the school community. Please feel free to forward suggestions to any member of the Nominating Committee prior to April 30. The committee will carefully review and consider all nominations and prepare a slate that best suits the needs of the board moving forward. We will share the slate and distribute ballots for election in May. Please feel free to email rich@kroths.com or reach out to any member of the committee with nominations, questions, or concerns.

Building & Grounds

School Work Days

Below is the calendar of the upcoming workdays. Please note that some changes have been made from the school calendar. Please RSVP to Mary K. Till (mtill@rivervalleysschool.org), to let us know if you will attend. This way we can plan what projects can be undertaken. Mary K. Till and Lynne Allbaugh - Building and Grounds

2015-2016 Work Days

TBD - 5th grade

February 27 - 3rd grade

March 12 - 2nd grade

April 23 - 1st grade

May 14 - Early Childhood

From the Community

Female Trumpet Swan and Runner Duck available

Former RVWS family is searching for a good home for a friendly, female Trumpet Swan and Runner Duck we have inherited. Please call Anna Dieterly at 908-303-1688 if you are interested.

Upcoming Real Girls Meetings:

Feb. 14, March 13, April 10, May 15

If you know a girl aged 12-17 from any family, background, or location, please let her know that she is welcome and will be valued at the next monthly meeting of the Real Girls. The Real Girls are an unaffiliated, grass-roots youth group with girls from over a dozen schools and home-school groups who come together to build a loving connection to self in a safe social sisterhood, to practice active kindness, listening, creativity, self-awareness, and body positivity. We seek to challenge limiting stereotypes about females and we reinforce positive messaging for ourselves and each other. We have guest speakers, make art, and stretch ourselves in every imaginable way.

For more information, you can contact RG facilitator Catherine Lent at 908-328-4460, go to RealGirlsFrenchtown on Facebook, or check out @girlsbeingreal on Instagram. We'd love to include your girls!

Calligraphy & Art Classes are BACK!

Wednesday evenings in Frenchtown...learn this gorgeous skill from an experienced, fun teacher!
Classic Copperplate: Pointed Pen Calligraphy (Feb. 24 and March 2)
Classic Italic: Broad-Pen Calligraphy (March 16, 23, and 30)
Modern Script Calligraphy Workshop (April 6)
Brush Lettering Workshop (April 13)
and also...
Paper Marbling (pending confirmation): March 26th
Origami for Teens & Adults: May 18th

Sign up at CatherineLentDesign.AcuityScheduling.com or find more information: at catherine@calligraphybycatherine.com, 908-328-4460, Catherine Lent Design on Facebook or Instagram.

Music Lessons

Heidi Breyer is accepting new music students in piano and violin at her home in Frenchtown, NJ. Heidi has a 15 year career in teaching, both privately and in schools including RVWS. She is focusing currently on teaching, performing music from her 4 albums around the country on an intermittent basis and is also writing her 5th collection in addition to substantial choral work.

Her phone number is 908 319 9528. www.heidibreyer.com

Learning Opportunities

Teens and Education - Upcoming Events

Presentation: Finding Your Path with Richard Schwab
March 9th, 7-8pm, Lawrenceville, NJ

Info Session: March 17th, 3pm at Princeton Learning Cooperative

Hosted by Princeton Learning Cooperative & Bucks Learning Cooperative - Personalized Learning Communities for Teens.

www.PrincetonLearningCooperative.org

www.BucksLearningCooperative.org All events are free and open to the public. Contact MaryBeth Healy @ 908-672-3455.

Learn the ancient art of natural HENNA!

Local mehndi artist and RVWS mom Catherine Lent is offering a five-part workshop series for all levels on alternating Tuesday evenings from March. 1 through April 26...you can take them a la carte or sign up for all five!

Workshops are:

March 1: Introduction to Henna

March 16: Recipe for Success

March 30: Flowers, Leaves, and Paisleys

April 12: Geometric & Moroccan Designs

April 26: Upping your Game.

You can see Catherine's work at Catherine Lent Design on Facebook and Instagram, and you can sign up at CatherineLentDesign.AcuityScheduling.com. Sign up for two, get \$10 off a third, sign up for three and get \$25 off a fourth, sign up for four and get the fifth night FREE! 908-328-4460

Coming to Yoga Loka

Stress Clinic with Bonnie Pariser

Fridays 6:30-8:30 pm - 2/19, 3/4

Yoga for Back Care with Bonnie Pariser

Sundays 11:45-12:45 pm Begins 1/24

TRE (Tension and Trauma Reducing Exercises) with Bonnie Pariser

Sundays 7:00-8:00 pm 2/21

Wednesdays 1:00 am-12:00 pm - 3/16

For more information and to register visit the website at www.Yoga-Loka.com

Ottsville Traditional Arts Center

Every Wednesday

Open Jam with Richard Finch

6:00-8:00 pm • \$5 suggested donation

More at ottsvilletradarts.weebly.com • 250 Durham Rd. Ottsville Pa.

New Cycle in 2016 of the Foundation Studies Program in Princeton

The new cycle for the Foundation Studies at the Waldorf School of Princeton will begin in the winter of 2016. This is the sixth cycle and the fourteenth year of the program. Over one hundred people have participated in our studies, some for personal development, some for the first step towards a professional life in Waldorf Education, and others to enhance the work in which they are already engaged.

The program covers Rudolf Steiner's basic books, and gives a foothold into his immense body of lectures and written works. Anthroposophy is dense and difficult to read independently at first without the foundational understanding offered in the program. After this five semester course, one can more easily delve into the many topics within Anthroposophy, i.e., education, agriculture, Eurythmy, the Arts, healing arts, medicine, and spiritual investigations such as karma.

The course meets 8 times per semester on Saturday mornings, at the Waldorf School of Princeton, from 8 am to 1 pm. We follow the school calendar and try to meet the needs of students' and parents' schedules when possible. Each morning includes a lecture, discussion, and two artistic workshops that enliven the concepts covered. Often the courses offered are Eurythmy and an artistic experience such as painting or sculpture. Guest teachers are invited to present other topics, for example, Speech or Biography. We now offer summer courses so that students can potentially finish in 15 months and begin teacher training if that is a path they wish to pursue. The cost per semester is \$600-800 sliding scale fee. The course provides a unique opportunity to form a small community together, sharing thoughts and partaking of small meals brought by the students. We have seen new friendships develop, and former friends become closer through the meaningful, shared experiences. The program is open to any interested adult of any age or background.

Faculty:

Elan Leibner lectures and leads discussions for the program. He was a class teacher at the Waldorf School of Princeton for 18 years. After that time he taught at Emerson College in England training Waldorf teachers. For the past five years he has been the Chair of the Pedagogical Section Council of North America and editor of the Research Bulletin for Waldorf Education. He mentors and evaluates teachers in Waldorf Schools around the country.

Pamela Shafer facilitates the program and offers artistic workshops. She has been the sculptural arts teacher at the school for 16 years and the fine arts teacher for the middle school for 3 years. She has been a potter for 35 years and has also worked with college students, the elderly, and in hospitals for 15 years before finding the Waldorf movement.

Tertia Gale has been teaching Eurythmy in the Foundation Program since it began. Before that she taught Eurythmy at the Waldorf School of Princeton for 20 years and was one of the founding members of the school. Her roots in Anthroposophy reach back even further to her work at the Fellowship Community in Chestnut Ridge, NY, supporting the elderly in conjunction with the work of Anthroposophical medicine.

If you are interested please contact Pamela Shafer at foundationprinceton@earthlink.net.

Camp Glen Brook

Do you know a 3rd or 4th grader who is looking for an amazing summer camp experience? At Camp Glen Brook we offer special sessions for first time campers within our fun and caring summer camp community. What sets us apart? We are a small Waldorf-inspired camp with a family feel and wholesome farm-to-table food in the beautiful Monadnock Region of southern New Hampshire. Find out more about all of our programs for 3rd - 10th graders at www.glenbrook.org

Reconnecting with Nature

The Bucks County Audubon Society is pleased to continue its free lecture series on the theme "Re-connecting with Nature" on the dates listed below. All of these lectures take place at the University's auditorium in the Life Sciences Building at 2:00 PM on Sunday afternoons;

February 7 -- Dr. Christopher Tipping, Interim Dean of the School of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences at the University will speak on "Using Plants to Attract Specific Groups of Insects to your Garden."

While many of us think of insects as pests, many insects are useful in the garden, serving as pollinators or helping to control populations of pest species in the garden. Dr. Tipping will speak to the question of how we can use plants to attract those desirable species to our gardens.

March 20 -- Miles Arnott, Executive Director of the Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve will speak on "Heralds of Spring," the often showy spring wildflowers that can be found in our natural environments in the early Spring season. These "spring ephemerals" are plant species that generally live in the shade of taller woody plants and must complete their reproduction and produce seeds before the taller plants leaf out in the Spring.

April 3 -- Deborah Cramer, author of the recently published book, "The Narrow Edge," will speak about her experiences following the migration of a medium-sized shorebird, the red knot, on its annual migration from wintering grounds at the southern end of South America, to nesting grounds in the high Canadian Arctic. Along the way many of these birds stop along the shores of the lower Delaware Bay to refuel on the eggs laid at the surf by horseshoe crabs, a species often described as a living fossil that has remained virtually unchanged for 500 million years. Other enterprises compete with the knots for the crabs, including medical researchers who have found that the unique blue blood of this animal can provide a reliable bioassay of bacterial contamination in biological preparations, such as vaccines, that must be produced free of bacterial contamination. Following her lecture Deborah will participate in a book signing arranged through the courtesy of the Doylestown Bookstore.

Again, there is no charge to attend any of these lectures and members of the faculty, staff, and student body of the University will be most welcome to attend. Questions about the lecture series may be directed to the Bucks County Audubon Society at 215-297-5880.

Piper Hill Dance

A quaint studio in a private setting where you can escape for an hour or more each week. Leave the stress outside and dance, exercise or meditate. Enjoy the music, movement, reviving your inner spirit. We offer Zumba®, Qi Gong, SharQui® Tuesday evenings and Wednesday mornings. 7078 Easton Rd Pipersville, PA 18947 484.366.2320 piperhilldance@gmail.com

Piano Lessons

Daytime, afternoon, evening lesson times available for Private Piano Instruction in Frenchtown. Adults and children.

MaryBeth (mom to Jaida - 1st grade) 908-672-3455

Upper Bucks Code Blue Shelter

If you or someone you know is lacking indoor shelter in Upper Bucks County during periods of extreme, life-threatening weather (temperature or wind chill of 26F or below between 12/1 and 3/31 your neighbors and friends are ready to help at the Quakertown Masonic Lodge, 501 W. Broad Street, Quakertown, PA 18951 from 9 pm to 7 am the following morning. We'll have hot meals and breakfast as well as shelter.

Car rides will be provided from Turkey Hill on Rt. 611 in Ottsville at 8:20 pm and Perkasio Square Shopping Center at 8:30 pm. Call 267-450-5191 to request a ride. To find out if the shelter is open contact the Code Blue Status Line: 215-274-5241 or 267-450-5191 after 1 pm.

Travel Opportunities

MAR 30 – APR 14: Centro de Terapia Antroposófica, Lanzarote, Canary Islands, Spain. In Search of Self-Renewal: Eurythmy Retreat and Nature Drawing with therapeutic eurythmist & artist Jason Yates and arranged by Sarnia Guiton. 604-740-0676 sarnia@sophiaservices.ca www.sophiaservices.ca

AUG 4 – 20: A Kenyan Eco-Safari -Through Goethe's Eyes with naturalists Mark Riegner & Anthony Mwaura, arranged by Sarnia Guiton. 604-740-0676 sarnia@sophiaservices.ca www.prestigeholidayskenya.com
www.sophiaservices.ca

For more information go to their website or call 604-740-0676.

3rd Grade Play



From the Wall Street Journal

Teach Your Children Well: Unhook Them From Technology

Teachers at Mountain Oak say they can immediately detect who has been using devices at home.

By NAOMI SCHAEFER RILEY

Jan. 1, 2016

In the far corner of the desolate looking yard outside Mountain Oak Charter School, a boy of 9 or 10 is digging a hole. A few other children are standing nearby, periodically checking his progress and taking a turn with the shovel.

Mountain Oak is a charter school that offers an education inspired by Waldorf, a progressive model that encourages exploration of the natural world and rejects the use of technology in the classroom and even in the home. When I ask later in the afternoon about the ditch digging, eighth-grade teacher Jeffrey Holmes smiles. "Oh, they're playing Minecraft," he says, referring to the popular online game. Last year "they had a whole system of ditches and they were bartering with rocks too."

Waldorf private schools have been around for almost 100 years—the first was launched by educator Rudolf Steiner in Germany. But they have been experiencing a resurgence in the U.S., where Waldorf has become popular with wealthy parents, including Silicon Valley types, who are attracted by the more simplified approach to learning.

In addition to eschewing technology, the schools tend to delay formal reading instruction—say, until the age of 7—and testing, and to reserve kindergarten entirely for imaginative play, especially with blocks and natural materials such as leaves and other things found outdoors. Students at all levels receive extensive instruction in music and art. They also do physical exercises in the classroom to break up their lessons.

But this model is no longer limited to private education. In recent years Waldorf-inspired charter schools have begun popping up—there are almost 50—especially in the West. Mountain Oak is one of the older ones, launched in 1999. It serves about 150 students in grades pre-K through 8, about half of whom receive a free or reduced-price lunch.

Mountain Oak students perform at the state average on tests, but the school has been given an A grade by Arizona's state education department because of the academic improvement its students experience compared with their peers with similar backgrounds at public schools. Unlike parents at the private Waldorf schools, though, many Mountain Oak parents must be persuaded by teachers that the elimination of tablets, smartphones and even television at home is an important part of this success.

Sunshine Reilly, who lives on a farm near Mountain Oak and has a son in sixth grade there, recalls putting him in front of the television for hours a day when he was a toddler while she did chores. It wasn't until he started kindergarten that she understood that the screen time was hurting his ability to entertain himself, to enjoy books and even to like playing outside.

Teachers at Mountain Oak say they can walk into a classroom and immediately tell who has been using devices at home. "We see it in their behavioral problems, their ability to reason, their cognitive skills, even their ability to communicate with other people," one teacher tells me.

Jennifer McMillan, who teaches kindergarten, says she has to "have the conversation in a gentle way." Many of these parents simply don't understand the effects that staring at a screen can have on children's behavior and their ability to learn.

Why would they? Most schools that cater to low-income children are trying to get them more technology, not less. Los Angeles spent \$1.3 billion in 2013 to put an iPad in the hands of every child in the district. Schools show parents these shiny new toys as evidence that they are giving their children a leg up, helping to bridge the so-called digital divide.

(Continued on next page.)

While there's evidence to suggest that poor children are slightly less likely to have access to laptops and tablets, those without are a pretty small slice of the population. According to a Pew report this year, "Fully 87% of American teens ages 13 to 17 have or have access to a desktop or laptop computer."

For families earning less than \$50,000 a year that number is 80%. As for a racial divide, Pew found that African-American teenagers are more likely to own a smartphone than any other group of teens in America.

What no one tells low-income families is this: The real digital divide is between parents who realize the harmful effects of technology on their children and try to limit them, and those who don't. It's the difference between parents buying wooden blocks this Christmas and those racking up more credit-card debt to buy a Leap Pad.

Research backs this up: In December the Journal of the American Medical Association, JAMA, published a study showing that electronic toys hinder verbal development. An article in the journal Mind, Brain and Education found that traditional toys "sparked higher quality conversations."

The teachers at Mountain Oak say they have the toughest time trying to reduce media use among children in single-parent households. Typically these mothers tend to be younger and less educated, and it is very tempting after a long day at work to come home and turn on a screen to keep a child occupied. The teachers keep prodding anyway.

Felicia Fishback, who is recently divorced, has never liked videogames, but once she started sending her four children to Mountain Oak, she realized that these were making her oldest son's behavior worse and hindering his academic performance. He had been diagnosed with ADHD and was gaining weight from a lack of physical activity.

Now her children are not allowed any screen time during the week and a little on weekends. "Mountain Oak," she says, "has made me a better parent."